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ABSTRACT

This collection of descriptions of research at the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students opens with the discussion of a synthesis of research on the effects of one-to-one tutoring programs used in first grade to prevent reading failure produced by Barbara Wasik and Robert Slavin. The synthesis reviews stringent evaluation evidence on five such programs. All were found instructionally effective, but undeniably expensive. Reviewing potential benefits and comparing them to other interventions makes the costs justifiable. A second discussion, "Disadvantaged Middle Grades Schools Provide Fewer Resources and Opportunities in Curriculum and Instruction," examines differences and similarities between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. "Community Involvement Review Urges Identification of Effective Practices, Increased Student Participation" notes that determining how community participation can best benefit disadvantaged children requires thoughtful study of the factors that make meaningful differences. "Success for All Includes Limited English Proficient Children" describes the "Success for All" program of the Francis Scott Key Elementary School in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). "Progress Grades and Written Comments Linked to Less Retention and Estimated Dropout" and "Review of Educational Adaptation of Immigrant Children Finds Diversity among and between Groups" highlight other efforts by the Center. (SLD)

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CDS Report

November 1990

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

CDS

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY NOVEMBER 1990

One-to-One Tutoring Produces Early Reading Success; Large Gains Justify Cost

Assume the following premises: First, every child can learn to read, given appropriate instruction, motivation, and resources.

Second, there is a "best" period for learning to read — basically, in the first grade.

Third, it makes real sense to prevent reading failure in the first place instead of letting it happen and then trying to remediate it. Research on Chapter 1, especially, shows that remediation is mostly ineffective.

Fourth, there is a method that has immense potential for use in the first grade to insure that all children without serious learning disabilities can learn to read — one-to-one tutoring.

Fifth, first-grade success in learning to read has long-term effects on disadvantaged children, either without additional intervention or with low-cost continuing intervention. These long-term effects include achievement in later grades, less retention, fewer referrals to special education, and reduced dropout.

Given these premises — only the last of which is not already strongly supported by research — CDS researchers Barbara Wasik and Robert Slavin reach a conclusion: "If we know that large numbers of students can be successful in reading the first time they are taught, and that the success not only lasts but also builds a basis for later success in school, we have a moral obligation to do whatever it takes to see that all students do in fact receive that which is necessary for them to succeed."

"That Which Is Necessary"

A major part of that which is necessary should be one-to-one tutoring in the first grade, according to Wasik and Slavin, based on their synthesis of research on the effects of one-to-one tutoring programs used in first grade to prevent reading failure.

The synthesis reviews the evidence on five such programs whose evaluations meet stringent criteria. First, the programs had to include one-to-one instruction delivered by adults (certified teachers, paraprofessionals, or volunteers) to students in the primary grades who are learning to read for the first time. Second, the evaluations had to compare the program to traditional instruction in elementary schools over periods of at least four weeks on measures of objectives pursued equally in the experimental and control conditions.

In short, the evaluations had to be methodologically strong, so their results could be believed with few reservations.

Five programs met the criteria. Wasik and Slavin found and reviewed ten separate studies of Reading Recovery, Success for All, Prevention of Learning Disabilities, the Wallach Tutoring Program, and Programmed Tutorial Reading.

The five programs not only met the criteria, their evaluations were unanimously positive. "Across ten separate

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studies of cohorts involving five different tutoring methods, effect sizes were substantially positive in every case," the researchers note. The bottom line is clear, they add: "One-to-one tutoring of low-achieving primary grade students is without doubt one of the most effective instructional innovations available."

If these programs are so effective, why aren't they in daily use in schools, especially in disadvantaged schools? The main barrier to widespread use is cost — providing one-to-one tutoring for 15-20 minutes each day for a significant proportion of a school's first graders is expensive.

Wasik and Slavin present a strong argument — if we know that every child can learn to read and we know how to teach every child to read, we are ethically (and maybe even eventually legally) required to do it, despite the cost. But the researchers recognize that while this type of moral argument may put them on the side of truth and justice, economic cost-benefit arguments and comparative effectiveness arguments are more likely to triumph. And they offer some strong ones.

Long-Term Costs

Wasik and Slavin find evidence of lasting effects of one-to-one tutoring — children continue to read better after leaving first grade, especially if they continue to receive low-cost follow-up, but the benefits persist even if they don't. The researchers also find less retention in grade and fewer referrals to special education. These factors can be translated into large cost savings for schools. But even more important, they can be translated into expected future cost savings for the whole society in terms of social, welfare, criminal justice, and productivity costs.

This argument parallels the argument made for the implementation of preschool programs — the future savings fully justify and probably even greatly exceed the cost.

Comparative Effectiveness

Wasik and Slavin's second argument says that we should look at the expensive interventions we're spending our money on now and how effective they are compared to one-to-one tutoring.

"Experiments in Tennessee, New York City, Toronto, and Indiana have reduced class size by almost half," they point out. "This is the same as hiring an additional teacher for each class, who could be instead used to provide one-to-one tutoring for 20 minutes per day to about 15 students."

Thus the costs of reducing class size and of offering one-to-one tutoring are comparable. What about the effects? Wasik and Slavin note that the most successful of the reduced-class size experiments found a cumulative effect of substantially reducing class size from kindergarten to third grade that is less than that found for any of the tutoring models — and often much less.

Studies of the effects of using teacher aides show little evidence of effectiveness, the researchers note. The aides could be used as tutors in one-to-one tutoring models, or be replaced by teachers for greater effect.

Along the same lines, many states are looking toward an extended school year, which is a very costly proposition, as an intervention that might improve achievement. One-on-one tutoring offers an alternative to this in the primary grades — an alternative that comes complete with convincing evidence that it can prevent reading failure and provide every child with a basis for further success in school.

"The researchers also find less retention in grade and fewer referrals to special education. These factors can be translated into large cost savings for schools. But even more important, they can be translated into expected future cost savings for the whole society in terms of social, welfare, criminal justice, and productivity costs."

Reference

Wasik, Barbara A. and Robert E. Slavin. *Preventing Early Reading Failure with One-to-One Tutoring: A Best Evidence Synthesis.* Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students. Report No. 6, June 1990. ($3.60).

Disadvantaged Middle Grades Schools Provide Fewer Resources and Opportunities in Curriculum and Instruction

Middle grades schools that enroll mainly low-achieving and low-income students, compared to those that enroll mainly high-achieving and higher income students, offer fewer extensive remedial programs, advanced courses, exploratory courses and minicourses, and extra-curricular activities. They are less likely to use instructional methods that promote active or higher-order learning.

They are, however, as likely as "advantaged" middle grades schools to offer substantial instruction in basic academic subjects and to use certain responsive practices (for example, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary teaming, and group advisory periods).

And when you look at racial-ethnic composition of the middle grades school, whether the school is advantaged, disadvantaged, or in-between, the schools with a high proportion of minority students are less likely to offer instruction for active learning, higher-order thinking, or enriched electives.

This mixture of findings is reported by CDS researchers Doug Mac Iver and Joyce Epstein, based on nationally representative survey information from 1,753 middle grades principals.

Defining Disadvantaged, Advantaged Schools

Four measures were used to classify schools as disadvantaged: the average ability of students upon entry to the school, the estimated percentage of students who will drop out before high school graduation, the percentage of students whose parents are on welfare or not regularly employed, and a composite score across the above three measures plus a community poverty indicator.

The label "disadvantaged school" is meant only as a "shorthand description" of a school that serves unusually large numbers of educationally and economically disadvantaged students. Conversely, an "advantaged school" is one that serves mainly the middle school-aged children of professionals and managers, or children whose academic achievement upon entry to the school is considered above national norms.

> ***"More than twice as many students are given the opportunity to take algebra (25% vs. 11%) and foreign language (30% vs. 13%) in advantaged middle grades schools. "***

Of the 1,727 schools that could be classified, 261 (15%) were disadvantaged, 247 (14%) were advantaged, and the remaining 1,219 (71%) were classified as regular schools.

Mac Iver and Epstein note that, in the disadvantaged schools, almost one-quarter of the students were not expected to graduate from high school and almost half came from families that were on welfare or not regularly employed. But they also point out that schools classified as regular or advantaged still usually enroll at least a modest number of disadvantaged students and "must consider how to effectively educate them."

Advantaged/Disadvantaged School Differences

The researchers examined differences between advantaged and disadvantaged schools in a number of areas. Some specific findings and their implications include:

- More than twice as many students are given the opportunity to take algebra (25% vs. 11%) and foreign language (30% vs. 13%) in advantaged middle grades schools. Thus disadvantaged young adolescents receive fewer advanced or "high content" courses.

The usual excuse for a lack of algebra classes is that disadvantaged students still haven't mastered basic facts and mechanical skills. The researchers suggest that the use of electronic calculators in accelerated math courses could help these students bridge the basic skills gap and begin to focus on higher-order skills and concepts.

- Disadvantaged middle grades schools (and regular schools) offer a full-scale exploratory program to fewer students than do advantaged schools.

Opportunities to explore art, computers, foreign language and other

> ***"The two major educational resources available to disadvantaged students — parents and teachers — are not receiving the training and guidance they need to be more effective in helping these students succeed."***

elective subjects or minicourses are vital to help reveal the talents and strengths of disadvantaged middle grades students and counter their frustrations in dealing with major academic subjects.

"Given the potential 'drawing power' of high-quality exploratory programs, it is disturbing that schools for the disadvantaged (and predominantly African American and Hispanic schools of any type) are less likely than other schools to offer a rich array of exploratory or minicourses or extracurricular activities to their young adolescents," Mac Iver and Epstein note.

They see funding inequities as part of the reason for the between-school differences, but also note that increasing the use of an 8-period day would be an inexpensive way for disadvantaged schools to begin to increase their students' opportunities for exploratory learning.

• Disadvantaged middle grades schools are much less likely to engage in parent involvement practices — to recruit and train parents to work as school volunteers, communicate frequently with parents, and have an active PTA. They are also less likely to provide staff development for teachers in early adolescent characteristics and specific teaching strategies for the middle grades.

Thus, Mac Iver and Epstein point out, "The two major educational resources available to disadvantaged students — parents and teachers — are not receiving the training and guidance they need to be more effective in helping these students succeed."

• Specific remedial activities — providing students who have fallen behind with an extra subject period of academic instruction instead of an elective, pull-out programs in reading or English and before- and after-school coaching classes — are more common in advantaged and regular middle grades schools than in disadvantaged schools.

Thus the schools with the most students in need of remediation provide the least extensive remediation programs. But the researchers note that this finding reflects the magnitude of the task faced by these schools. One volunteer teacher, for example, may be able to handle an after-school coaching program in a school where few students need remediation, but initiating such a program in a mainly disadvantaged school could require a dozen or more volunteer teachers.

Similarly, an extra period of math might be easily arranged for the small number of disadvantaged students in an advantaged school, but might require dramatic changes in staffing and scheduling patterns in a school where most students are not achieving well in math.

• Disadvantaged middle grades schools use higher-level and active-learning instructional methods much less frequently than either advantaged or regular schools.

"The three types of schools do not differ in their frequency of use of drill-and-practice methods," Mac Iver and Epstein note. "Drill-and-practice methods are dominant in schools of all types, but schools that serve mainly advantaged populations supplement these methods with richer instructional approaches."

Advantaged/Disadvantaged School Similarities

Mac Iver and Epstein find some areas in which disadvantaged and advantaged middle grades schools are similar to one another. These include offering substantial instruction in basic academic subjects and using responsive practices (cooperative learning, interdisciplinary teaming, group advisory periods). Also, both types of schools tend to be significantly larger than regular schools.

In each of these cases, the similarity between disadvantaged and advantaged schools does not necessarily have positive implications.

• About 59% of seventh- or eighth-grade students receive a reading course and about 78% receive two full years of science instruction in middle grades schools whether the schools are disadvantaged or advantaged or in-between.

The researchers caution that what looks like equity in these areas may not actually be. If about 59% of students in

advantaged schools get a reading course in addition to English, this course may be meeting the extra-instruction needs of all the students who need it. In the disadvantaged schools, however, this course may be meeting the extra-instruction needs of only a proportion of the students who need it.

"Early adolescence represents a critical period in the acquisition of advanced literacy skills," Mac Iver and Epstein say. "Does it make sense that the schools serving the youth with the most severe literacy needs are not more likely than other schools to offer courses and remedial instruction specifically devoted to helping students correct and advance their reading skills?"

• Disadvantaged middle grades schools are just as likely as advantaged schools to use cooperative learning methods, mixed-grade grouping, interdisciplinary teams, and group advisory periods, and to offer independent projects to all students.

Mac Iver and Epstein note that "educators in many disadvantaged schools are reaching out...to improve programs and practices." Again, however, positive indications are tempered by reality. Because teachers in disadvantaged middle grades schools receive fewer staff development opportunities, they are less likely to be able to effectively implement the above practices and structures.

Although disadvantaged schools use cooperative learning practices as often as do advantaged schools, Mac Iver and Epstein put this use in perspective when they note that eight out of ten middle grades schools are not using cooperative learning methods, so that "use of these methods is just as rare in disadvantaged schools as in other schools."

• Disadvantaged and advantaged middle grades schools are similar in size, both being larger than regular schools. The average total enrollment is 543 in the disadvantaged schools, 546 in advantaged, and 463 in regular.

The two types of schools are large for different reasons, however. Advantaged schools are generally large because they are often found in fast-growing high-status suburban and urban neighborhoods, and because parents of advantaged youngsters, when given a choice, will send their children to these schools even if they do not live in the neighborhood.

Disadvantaged schools, on the other hand, are generally large because they are more often located in densely-populated low-economic urban areas where parents have few options except to send their children to the neighborhood school.

Racial-Ethnic Composition of School Affects Curriculum and Instruction

In their analyses, Mac Iver and Epstein classified schools as disadvantaged based on the presence of academic achievement risk factors, students' academic records and histories, and several measures of family economic background. In addition, the analyses controlled for the effects of other factors — grade organization, grade enrollment, region, and urbanicity/size of metropolitan population.

The racial-ethnic composition of the school was not considered when classifying a school as disadvantaged, regular, or advantaged. So the question remained — even after controlling for other indicators of disadvantage, might the degree of minority enrollment in the school affect the curriculum and instruction in the school?

Mac Iver and Epstein found that disadvantaged middle grades schools that were predominantly minority — African-American or Hispanic — were less likely to use hands-on or higher-order learning instructional methods and were less likely to offer as much opportunity to explore fine arts, practical and life skills, and other enriching curriculum areas.

"Although our school classification process was color-blind," the researchers note, "our nation's educational system is not."

Reference

Mac Iver, Douglas J. and Joyce L. Epstein. *How Equal Are Opportunities for Learning in Disadvantaged and Advantaged Middle Grades Schools?* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Report No. 7, July 1990. ($5.40).

Community Involvement Review Urges Identification of Effective Practices, Increased Student Participation

We know that communities affect the intellectual and psychosocial development of the children who live in them and, in the final analysis, the fate of our disadvantaged children rests not only with our improvement of schooling and parenting, but also with effective community participation.

But the journey toward determining how community participation can best benefit disadvantaged children is a trip through uncharted waters, according to CDS researcher Saundra Nettles. She seeks to provide some direction and guidance in a synthesis of findings from evaluations of community involvement projects, basic research, case studies, and other descriptive data.

Nettles identifies three broad classes of factors that are pertinent to the role of the community in the achievement and psychosocial outcomes of disadvantaged students — community structure, community climate, and community involvement.

Community Structure

Community structure includes "physical features, social area characteristics, and other aspects of the community's resources," Nettles notes. It includes the educational resources available in the community, the community's history of seeking to intervene on behalf of its children, the extent of disorganization of the community, and the physical environment of the community.

Most research, Nettles says, has focused on community social area characteristics and physical features. The effects of disorganized communities (determined by high male unemployment, high proportions of female-headed households, high proportions of households on welfare) compared to high affluence and high education communities are not "straightforward," Nettles notes.

Both types of communities have their problems with troubled youth. For example, middle and junior high school males in affluent areas report more involvement in theft and vandalism. In disorganized communities, however, both middle and junior high school males and females reported that they were negatively influenced by peers and less attached and committed to school. None of these effects are particularly strong.

Factors related to the community physical environment show stronger effects. Noisy homes and crowded homes produce adverse impacts on student behaviors.

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Community Culture

Community culture is defined as the norms, rules, and values that govern social relationships in the community. Poor urban neighborhoods, for example, may value a norm of reciprocity and expect residents to acquire competency in mutual exchange behaviors.

Nettles finds that community culture has been explored almost exclusively through ethnographic studies. Because the effects of community structure are filtered through community culture, she stresses that community culture needs to be much more thoroughly researched through the use of reliable measures in varied settings.

Community Involvement

Community involvement includes the specific actions that community organizations and individuals take to promote student development. Nettles characterizes involvement under four basic processes — mobilizing for change, allocating resources, providing instructional programs in community settings, and converting individual students.

"Extensive practical knowledge" is available on ways to mobilize community involvement. Nettles describes general guides for community action, handbooks that suggest highly specific actions to link schools and students with other community entities, and case

studies of partnerships carried out by schools with businesses, social service agencies, community-based organizations, and so on.

Partnerships, Nettles notes, often originate in the efforts of unusually determined, resourceful, or charismatic persons. However, research that tests the impact of these projects on student outcomes is rare.

Community involvement in resource allocation focuses on determining the use of local school resources, removing barriers to student use of new and existing resources, changing the incentive structures to encourage student use of resources, and providing social support for students in the use of the resources.

Nettles describes school-based services, school-based clinics, school-service provider networks, job-access programs, and enrichment and service activities designed to improve the allocation of resources to disadvantaged students. As examples of changing incentive structures, she cites the Boston Compact and the I Have A Dream Foundation. She describes home visiting, peer counseling, mentoring, and coordination programs and projects as forms of social support for disadvantaged students.

Nettles also describes programs in community settings offered by various groups that are focused on improving academic performance. These include the work of the Majestic Eagles Inc., which sponsors youth training clubs, the Society of Executive Retired Volunteers, the Congress of National Black Churches, the National Council of La Raza, the Project on Adolescent Literacy, and others.

Research on the effectiveness of achievement-related projects generally finds few strong effects on the academic performance of disadvantaged students (grades and test scores), finds somewhat stronger effects on factors such as absenteeism, self-esteem, and attitudes toward school, and finds that the level of participation is closely related to the strength of any effects.

Thus Nettles sees a need for research "to address two tough challenges: identify effective practices from among the scores that now exist, and foster student participation in program activities."

Reference

Nettles, Saundra M. *Community Involvement and Disadvantaged Students: A Review.* (Annotated bibliography by Brenda Greenberg). Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, The Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 8, July 1990. ($6.20).

Success for All Includes Limited English Proficient Children

Students from Asian backgrounds, primarily Cambodian, make up about half of the school population at Francis Scott Key Elementary School in Philadelphia. Their disadvantage in terms of achieving well in American schools is at least double — they face not only the poverty conditions shared by other children in their inner-city neighborhoods, but also the disadvantage of having little or no English spoken in their homes.

At Key, the Success for All elementary school restructuring program is undergoing a major evaluation — does *All* include limited English proficient (LEP) children from poor neighborhoods? Can the program that is showing large successes in improving the reading achievement of urban African-American children be as effective for children who also face a language barrier?

Results of the first and second years of implementation of Success for All at Francis Scott Key signal a definite yes to both questions.

Success for All

Success for All is a program designed to ensure that every child who enters school, regardless of home background, will succeed in basic skills in the early grades and then maintain that success through the elementary years. The program uses innovative kindergarten and grade 1-3 reading programs, one-to-one tutoring from certified teachers for students who are having difficulties in reading, frequent assessment, family support services, and other interventions to try to make sure that students begin with success and remain successful through the early grades.

Studies of Success for All have found substantial positive effects of the

program on student reading achievement and reduced retentions and special education referrals in schools serving primarily disadvantaged African-American students. (See CDS Report No. 1 for a complete description of the program and its evaluation results.)

Key School

In 1988-89, Francis Scott Key served 622 students in grades K-8. Fifty-two percent of its students are from Asian backgrounds, primarily Cambodian. Nearly all of these students enter the school in kindergarten with little or no English. Some of their fathers but very few mothers speak English. The remainder of the school is divided between African-American (22%) and white students (22%), with a small number of Hispanic students (4%). The school is located in an extremely impoverished neighborhood in South Philadelphia. Ninety-six percent of the students are from low-income families and qualify for free lunch.

Because of the unavailability of Cambodian-speaking teachers, Francis Scott Key uses an immersion/ESL approach to its LEP students. Such "immersion/ESL" programs put students in the difficult position of trying to learn to read a language with which they have little facility.

Beginning in September 1988, CDS researchers began working with principal Renee Yampolsky and her staff at Key to implement Success for All in grades K-3. The researchers note, however, that this was not just "your standard Success for All." It also included separate ESL instruction which, although given for less time than the usual district program, focused specifically on supporting students' success in the regular reading program, with the ESL teachers using thematerials and techniques of the Success for All program.

Also, a special tutoring program was implemented in kindergarten. In the first year, seventh- and eighth-graders worked with kindergarten children for forty-five minutes two days per week. In the second year, fifth-graders provided the tutoring. In both years, all kindergarten children benefitted from the tutoring, but it was especially valuable for the Cambodian children, who were assigned to Cambodian tutors.

"In a school lacking Cambodian-speaking adults, the other students provided the Cambodian kindergartners with their only opportunity to use their primary language in an instructional context," the researchers note.

Measures and Results

First-year results were reported for Grades 1 and 2 only, because there were too few Limited English Proficient children in the school used as a control to allow for meaningful comparisons at the kindergarten and third grade levels.

The measures used were two Woodcock Proficiency Battery scales (Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack), two Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty Scales (Oral Reading and Silent Reading), the Total Reading scale from a citywide standardized test, and a Bilingual Syntax Measure.

The first year analyses found that, in the first grade, the Asian students at Francis Scott Key scored substantially better than comparison students in Word Attack (ES=+.99), but because of the small sample in the comparison group this difference was only marginally significant ($p<.06$). Across all five measures — the two Woodcock scales, the two Durrell scales, and the Total Reading scale — the mean effect size for reading was +.23.

Second grade results strongly favored Success for All. Differences averaged +.81 across the reading

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measures; four of the five differences were statistically significant, and the fifth (Durrell Silent Reading) was large (ES=+.54) but only marginally significant ($p<.08$).

Believe It or Don't

The researchers concluded that the first-year results were encouraging, but they also concluded that their comparison school had too small a population of Asian students to make meaningful comparisons and come to totally believable conclusions. If they continued with the same comparison school, each year they would have to label the results as "tentative."

Thus when the evaluation of Success for All began its second year at Key (1989-90), it included a new comparison school that matched Key much more closely on percent of Asian students, achievement levels, and percent of free-lunch students. Second-year results, whatever they might be, would not have to be labelled as tentative.

Second-Year Results

Most of the same measures were retained for the second-year analyses of grades one to three. In addition, the IDEA Proficiency Test, which measures English language proficiency, was given to all Asian students. In kindergarten, the measures used were the Woodcock Letter-Word Identification Scale, the Merrill Language Screen Test Comprehension scale, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary scale, and the Test of Language Development (TOLD) Sentence Imitation scale.

First grade results are of prime interest — these are the kids who have completed two years of Success for All. The Key first-graders — Asian and non-Asian — had a mean reading achievement level across the measures that reflected a grade equivalent of 1.8 — nearly grade level.

Asian students in the comparison school, with a grade equivalent of 1.1, were essentially still non-readers. The effect size of +1.65 for the achievement of Asian first-graders at Key compared to Asian first-graders in the control school is, in a word, substantial. Positive effects were also found for the Key Asian students on the IDEA Proficiency Test.

Other results of the second year: both Asian and non-Asian kindergarten students at Key scored much higher on a variety of the measures than their comparison group; Asian second-graders at Key scored much higher in reading performance (effect size = +1.00) than comparison students while non-Asian Key second-graders scored somewhat higher; finally, in third grade, no significant differences were found between Key and comparison children.

You Can Believe It

Satisfied that their methodology is strong with the new comparison school, the researchers see nothing "tentative" about second-year results.

"...the results confirm two Success for All patterns seen in other schools — the effects are strongest for children who begin their reading instruction in the program (kindergartners and first-graders at Key), and the effects of the program are greatest for the lowest achievers in the school (Asian students at Key)."

They note that the results confirm two Success for All patterns seen in other schools — the effects are strongest for children who begin their reading instruction in the program (kindergartners and first-graders at Key), and the effects of the program are greatest for the lowest achievers in the school (Asian students at Key). There is reason, the researchers note, for "considerable optimism."

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Slavin, Robert E., Mary Leighton and Renee Yampolsky. *Success for All: Effects on the Achievement of Limited English Proficient Children.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students. Report No. 5, June 1990. ($2.50).

Slavin, Robert E. and Renee Yampolsky. *Success for All at Francis Scott Key Elementary School: Year 2 Report.* Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students. Report No. 14, November 1990. ($3.20).

Progress Grades and Written Comments Linked to Less Retention and Estimated Dropout

When report card time rolls around, low achieving disadvantaged students are more likely to get depressed than get motivated. Unless, according to CDS researcher Douglas Mac Iver, teachers use those report cards to provide handwritten comments about students' work and include progress grades along with the usual performance grades.

Mac Iver examined the effects of using various report card entries in middle grades schools on three outcomes — retention rates, estimated dropout rates, and principals' perceptions of the strength of the school's overall program. Progress grades and handwritten comments had positive effects on all three of these outcomes.

Putting his findings in perspective, Mac Iver estimates that in a middle school with 650 students "ten more students will earn promotion each year if the school uses both written comments and progress grades on report cards than if the school doesn't use them."

Similarly, in a middle school that has 325 boys enrolled "the combined use of progress grades and written comments is associated with 12 fewer ... dropping out before they finish high school."

Progress grades, notes Mac Iver, allow low achievers who are displaying consistent improvement to get A's or B's in progress even if their performance is low relative to other students. Handwritten comments may let low-achieving students know that "teachers are paying attention to them and recognizing their contributions to the class." Thus both of these grading practices are effective in motivating students.

But motivating students may not be the whole story. Mac Iver notes that, in order to give progress grades and prepare written comments, teachers must "pay more attention to each student's improvement and areas of strength." Thus the use of these grading practices helps make teachers more aware of the positive accomplishments of low-achieving students.

On the other hand, Mac Iver finds little motivation for disadvantaged students and no positive effects on the three outcome measures for four other report card entries — letter or number performance grades, effort grades, conduct grades, and computer-generated comments.

Reasons include: A desirable performance grade may be impossible to obtain for students who begin the year far behind grade level, no matter how hard they work. A high effort grade given to these students, if accompanied by a low performance grade, may make them feel that trying doesn't really help.

Also, conduct grades have their drawbacks — a low conduct grade may be viewed by young adolescents as a controlling, punitive measure designed to make them conform, and may have negative impact on the self-esteem and attachment to school of young adolescent girls in particular.

Finally, computer-generated comments are intended to motivate students through the same kind of personal recognition as handwritten comments. The trouble is, computer-generated comments are not personal.

Mac Iver points out that the use of alternative report card practices is not linked to specific school characteristics or populations. "If it chooses to," he notes, "almost any school can start including progress grades... or comments on report cards."

"Progress grades and handwritten comments had positive effects on all three of these outcomes."

Reference

Mac Iver, Douglas J. *A National Description of Report Card Entries in the Middle Grades*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, The Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 9, July 1990. ($4.50).

Review of Educational Adaptation of Immigrant Children Finds Diversity Among and Between Groups

Since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, the immigrant population of the United States has grown rapidly and diversely, with newly-arrived contingents from all over the world.

These new immigrants include, among others, Mexican-origin groups, Central American (Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans) and other Spanish-speaking groups, Southeast Asians (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao), East Asians (Chinese, Korean, and Japanese), Filipinos, Punjabi Sikhs from India, and Caribbean immigrants (Cubans, Haitians, Dominicans, and other West Indians). With the notable exception of the Caribbean immigrants, the new immigrants have settled principally in California.

In 1989, more than 29% of California's K-12 public school children spoke a primary language other than English at home — thus almost a third of the children in California schools are either immigrants or native-born children of immigrants. The question: How are these children, faced with language and other disadvantagements, adapting to the American educational system?

The overall answer is that they are adapting very well under certain conditions and not so well under others, according to researcher Rubén Rumbaut at San Diego State University. He reviews three sources of data about the educational performance of immigrant students and their adaptation to the education system — the California Tomorrow statewide survey of immigrant students, a study of the 1986-87 high school student cohort in the San Diego Unified School District, and four case studies of recent immigrant students and their school experiences.

California Tomorrow Data

The reasons for immigration given by students include political conditions, cited most frequently by Southeast Asian and Central American refugees; economic conditions, cited most often by Mexican immigrants; and family reunification, noted mainly by Filipinos and East Asians.

Almost all students report encountering problems with American students due to ethnicity or race. This was especially true for adolescents and for those who arrived in the country most recently. Two-thirds of the students said that their friends were primarily other co-ethnic immigrants, indicating a degree of isolation from other students. This isolation is also seen in the students' reports of study habits. Hardly any students mentioned that they studied with American friends.

These students also reported the hours that they put into studying. More than half (55%) of the East Asian immigrant students reported that they spend more than two hours each night on their homework, followed by Southeast Asians (40%), Central Americans (27%), Filipinos (22%), and Mexicans (11%) — a rank-order that roughly parallels their self-reported grades in school.

San Diego High School Data

Ethnic "minorities" are now the majority in the San Diego Unified School District. Rumbaut reviews a detailed assessment of patterns of school performance among Limited English Proficient (LEP), Fluent English Proficient (FEP), and English-Monolingual students representing a wide variety of ethnic groups. In general, LEP students are more recently arrived immigrants who still have language difficulties, FEP students are bilingual (having learned English while maintaining their original language), and English-monolingual are primarily white Anglos and African Americans, but also include large percentages of East Asians (59.7%), Pacific Islanders (45.4%), Filipinos (38.5%), and Hispanics (32.8%) who are living in English-speaking homes.

Rumbaut finds specific patterns in dropout, reading and math performance, and grade point averages earned.

• Pacific Islanders and Hispanics have the highest annual dropout rates, followed by African Amercians and White Anglos. Asian students as a whole have lower dropout rates. Overall, LEP students — struggling with the language — have high dropout rates. But FEP students — who have overcome their language problems to become bilingual — have much lower

dropout rates than English monolinguals.

• LEP students, understandably, show low scores on CTBS tests of reading vocabulary skills, FEP students score higher, and English-monolingual students score highest (at the 5.12 stanine). The exception to this is East Asian FEP students, who outscore English monolinguals on reading vocabulary.

• In math computation, FEP East Asians, Southeast Asians, and Filipinos outscore all White Anglos, Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and African Americans handily. Even LEP East Asian and Vietnamese outpace English-monolinguals on math computation.

• On grade point averages (GPA's), both LEP and FEP East Asian, Southeast Asian, and Filipino immigrants outperform majority Anglo students, Pacific Islanders, Anglos, and African Americans. The highest GPA's are found among immigrant Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Filipino students. Even the Hmong immigrant students, whose parents are largely preliterate peasants from the Laotian highlands, and the more recently-arrived Cambodians are earning higher grade point averages than native-born American students.

Case Studies of Recent Immigrants

Rumbaut reviews four case studies that provide rich detail about the educational adaptation of four groups of immigrant students — Southeast Asians, Punjabi Indians, Central Americans, and Mexicans.

Among the numerous findings produced by these case studies, Rumbaut notes a recurring theme related to successful educational adaptation by each group or segments of each group. Those who adapt most successfully are those who maintain their own cultural identities even as they do what is necessary to function well in their host society — learn English, compete in school, ignore racial/ethnic remarks and actions, and so on.

"For new immigrants in American schools," Rumbaut says, "the data...point to a positive association between school performance and a resilient affirmation of collective ethnic identity."

Reference

Rumbaut, Rubén G. *Immigrant Students in California Public Schools: A Summary of Current Knowledge*. Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Report No. 11, August 1990. ($5.70).

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